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1953

JOHN MARTIN
1789-1854

THE WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY

23rd SEPTEMBER - 1st NOVEMBER 1953

300·81

An exhibition of paintings and drawings by

JOHN MARTIN 1789-1854

from public and private collections

in Great Britain.

THE WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY
HIGH STREET, LONDON, E.1

Chairman of Trustees :
THE RIGHT HON. THE VISCOUNT BEARSTED D.L., T.D.

Director : BRYAN ROBERTSON

This exhibition represents the first comprehensive assembly of John Martin's work to be seen in London since his death in 1854. During the Festival of Britain of 1951 a large exhibition of his work was organized at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne which consolidated the growing interest in Martin's pictures.

Our present exhibition contains a large number of pictures that were exhibited at Newcastle, the most notable additions being "Macbeth," from the National Gallery of Scotland, "Arthur and Aegle" from the Laing Art Gallery (this picture had not been acquired by the Gallery at the time of the Newcastle exhibition), "Mountain Landscape with Rocks," from the Victoria and Albert Museum and "The Assuaging of the Waters" from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This picture was presumed until very recently to be lost or destroyed.

The Trustees of the Whitechapel Art Gallery acknowledge with gratitude the help and co-operation of Mrs. Robert Frank; and Mr. Thomas Balston, Martin's biographer, who has devoted much care and thought to the organisation of this exhibition, as well as contributing a Foreword and Notes to our catalogue. The Trustees are also deeply indebted to the following private collectors, Museums and Public Galleries, whose generosity and interest have made this exhibition possible:

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FOREWORD BY THOMAS BALSTON

About 1770 Fenwick Martin, a young tanner of Bardon Mill in the South Tyne valley, eloped to Gretna Green with Isabella Thompson, the daughter of a neighbouring landowner. Ten years later he enlisted in the Army during the American War of Independence, was wounded in quelling a mutiny, and discharged on a small pension. Thereafter he became a rolling stone, and by 1789, when his son John was born, was living in a one-roomed cottage at Haydon Bridge which now bears a tablet to John's memory. There had been twelve older children of whom only four survived. William later became notorious as the self-styled "Natural Philosopher" who hawked his innumerable pamphlets about Newcastle-on-Tyne, wearing a brassbound tortoise-shell as a hat; Richard became a Quartermaster-Sergeant in the Grenadier Guards, and published a long poem: *The Last Days of the Antediluvian World*; Jonathan set fire to York Minster in 1829, and ended his days in Bedlam; there was also a sister Ann.

John Martin passed his first fourteen years at Haydon Bridge, and received his only formal education at its Grammar School, where grammar, writing, mathematics and navigation were taught free of charge, and Greek and Latin for a penny a quarter (see No. 2). His three brothers were all fond of drawing, and at an early age he learnt to draw. His first painting was done with colours given him by a housepainter on an old canvas he found among the ruins of Langley Castle. From this period can be dated the chief inspirations of his life's work; from his mother, an ardent Protestant (her mother had been a Ridley of the martyr Bishop's family), he acquired his preoccupation with the Bible story; and from the great panoramas of the South Tyne valley, bathed in sunlight or lashed by storms of uncommon violence, his passion for vast idyllic or tumultuous scenes.

In 1803 the family moved to Newcastle, and Martin was apprenticed to a coach-builder to learn heraldic painting. A year later he ran away on account of a dispute about his wages, in which he was upheld by the magistrates, and became the pupil of a Piedmontese painter, Boniface Musso, who had settled in Newcastle. After one quarter Fenwick could no longer pay the fees, and Musso continued his instruction free of charge. Musso's large collection of engravings after Claude, Salvator Rosa, and other romantic artists became the third great inspiration of Martin's work.

This, to Martin, ideal existence lasted little more than a year before Musso decided to migrate to London, where his son, Charles Muss, was working as a china painter. A few months later Musso invited Martin to join them, and in September 1806, when he was little more than seventeen, he embarked on a Newcastle trader. But when he arrived, he found that Muss had lost his job, and for a time all three of them were in dire straits, Martin trying to make a livelihood by hawking drawings based on his memories of Northumberland. At last Muss found work for himself and Martin at William Collins's glass factory in the Strand, and in 1808, at the age of eighteen, Martin married Susan Garrett, who was some years older than himself.

To supplement his small wages Martin took to painting in the evenings, and in 1810 sent a picture to the Academy. It was rejected, but a landscape was accepted the next year, and in 1812 three more pictures, of which one, *Sadak* (see No. 3) was bought by a Governor of the Bank of England. Then four years passed before, at the 1816 Academy, his *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still* made him famous. The picture has disappeared, but it is still well-known from his large engraving of it (see No. 70), with its stupendous architecture and innumerable host set in a vast storm-ridden landscape. It broke all the current rules of 'history painting,' and the public was thrilled, though the pundits were dismayed. Five years later, in 1821, his *Belshazzar's Feast* caused such a stir that for the next thirty years he became, with the possible exception of J. M. W. Turner, the most famous English artist both here and in Europe and America. Throughout this period engravings of *Belshazzar*, by himself and others, were sold in such numbers that there was hardly a home without one. In 1826 his *Deluge* almost repeated this success. This picture too has disappeared, but his own large mezzotint of it (see No. 71), the most sensitive of all his engravings, reinforces his own judgment that it was his greatest work.

It was many years before he again painted a picture of such originality. Since 1823 he had been experimenting with mezzotint engraving on the newly invented steel plate, and during the next twenty years executed more than a hundred engravings, including fifteen large ones after his own paintings and the two sets, of 24 plates each, illustrating *Paradise Lost* (see Nos. 11—20; and Nos. 72—81). Even more detrimental to his painting was an obsession with schemes for improving London's water supply and sewage system. The result was that by 1837 he and his wife and six surviving children were on the verge of ruin. At the last moment

he was saved by the happy thought of painting *The Coronation of Queen Victoria*, now in the Tate Gallery. All the central figures at the ceremony were asked to sit in his studio, and many of them bought or commissioned pictures. For the rest of his life he was painting pictures, and selling them ; some of them were repetitions of his early successes, but among them were such great original works as *The Flight into Egypt* (54″ × 83″) of 1842, now in The U.S.A., and Councillor Weidner's *Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* (see No. 34) of 1852. By that date he had already started, at the age of 61, on a series of three huge paintings, the *Judgment Pictures* (see Nos. 35-37, which were to display the full powers of his imagination. He had hardly completed them when, in the autumn of 1853, he started on a visit to the Isle of Man, where, on November 12th, he had a stroke. He lingered on for three months, unable to speak or use his hands, with his gaze fixed on the sea and sky, as represented in his son Charles' crayon drawing (see No. 1). He died on February 17th 1854, and was buried in a vault in Kirk Braddan Cemetery.

The next year, the *Judgment Pictures* were exhibited in London, where they were generally acclaimed as his masterpieces, and for the next 20 years at least they made a triumphal tour through the provinces and the United States. Meanwhile four of his paintings had been included in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition (1857), and three in the International Exhibition (London, 1862), but by the time these tours ended, Martin's reputation among collectors had vanished, and the *Judgment Pictures* had become unsaleable. For the next 70 years they had a precarious survival in store-rooms and cellars ; in 1935 they fetched less than £7 between them at Robinson & Fisher's. During this long eclipse Martin came to be remembered, if at all, as a painter of vast theatrical Bible pictures, and acquired the utterly unfounded soubriquet " Mad Martin " ; by the 'forties hardly anyone had seen more than one or two of his pictures, and those were hidden under the dirt of a century. Then the tide turned. In 1944 the Tate Gallery bought its little *Biblical Scene*, in 1945 the large Judgment picture *The Great Day of His Wrath*, and in 1947 *The Coronation*. Since then other pictures by Martin have been acquired by many of the chief galleries of Great Britain, as can be seen by the list of lenders to this exhibition. Even more effective, however, in rehabilitating Martin, has been the tireless enthusiasm of Mr. Robert Frank. From 1945 onwards he spared no trouble or expense in searching out and acquiring Martin's pictures, and in having them most carefully cleaned. It was through him, and him alone, that in 1951 Mr. Bernard Stevenson,

the Curator of the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was able to stage the memorable exhibition of Martin's works which for the first time made it possible to appraise his full achievement. Of the 56 oil-paintings exhibited no less than 35 were lent by Mr. Frank. He had promised the same generous assistance to the present exhibition, but he died suddenly on May 23rd of this year. Only by the kindness of Mrs. Frank, who fully sympathised with his enthusiasm, has it been possible to make this exhibition so worthy of the artist.

NOTE

When I wrote *John Martin; his Life and Works* (Duckworth 1947) I was familiar with nearly all the engravings by or after him, but I was precluded from attempting any appreciation of him as a painter by the fact that very few of his pictures had then been located, and most of those few were almost hidden beneath dirt and varnish. Since then 50 more have been located, and very many have been cleaned. It should now be possible to assess his merits and defects as a painter, to investigate the influences of others on his work, and to estimate his place in the history of European art. It is much to be desired that someone with the necessary qualifications should undertake this task.

On the biographical and historical side I have found little to add to my book except one matter of some literary importance. Of all the many visitors to Haworth who have written about the Brontës, none seems to have noted the signs of Martin's influence until Mr. A. L. Rowse (*The English Past* 1851) called attention to a print of *Belshazzar's Feast* in the parlour, a couple of landscapes and a watercolour copied from Martin in Mr. Brontë's bedroom, and in the dining-room " beautiful watercolours of that imaginary land (Angria), done by Charlotte, influenced very much by John Martin," and " one of Glasstown touched similarly by his architectural megalomania."

THOMAS BALSTON

THE ART OF JOHN MARTIN
BY ERIC NEWTON

No one has succeeded in defining the word 'romanticism,' yet no one can fail to recognise its appearance in life or in art when it occurs in one of its extremist forms. And in most of John Martin's paintings the form it takes is so extreme that 'romantic' seems an understatement. Yet, in any history of the Romantic movement which, in its long and varied progress, produced phenomena so different as *Fonthill Abbey*, Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and the sport of mountaineering, John Martin deserves at least a short chapter to himself.

With the possible exception of Gustave Doré, no artist has so consistently and so relentlessly used all the ingredients necessary for the concoction of what was once called the 'Sublime.' Martin's purpose was to impress, to overwhelm, to fill the beholder with awe. In order to carry out this programme he invented three moods, each with its own appropriate scenic or pictorial paraphernalia—first, the mood of radiant serenity, with its far-flung, untroubled immensities of distance bathed in an unearthly blue light: second, the mood of garganţuan construction, in which man has dwarfed his own stature by creating for himself an impossibly grandiose architectural environment of Babylonian skyscrapers and palaces whose columns, dizzily multiplied, support vast terraces and recede into giddy perspectives: lastly, the mood of daemonic vengeance in which Nature turns on mankind with storm and lightning and earthquake as though in answer to Lear's prayer:

> "Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
> Crack nature's moulds, all germins spill at once."

It is easy to smile cynically at such a programme. Yet it gratifies a basic human hunger. There are many reasons why no artist attempts to follow it to-day. Doubtless contemporary criticism would explain our reaction against Martin's melodrama in terms of aesthetics, or by an analysis of the change in taste. But the appetite for large-scale melodrama is still very much alive. All that has changed is the technique for satisfying it. Until quite recently the megalomania that was once John Martin's speciality was provided by Hollywood. Only the physical limitations of the cinema prevent Mr. Cecil B. de Mille from beating Martin at his own game: and with Hollywood's command of contemporary glamour and the added attraction of plot and movement, the cinema has now permanently ousted the grandiose

painter from his chosen territory. To-day, that territory has expanded a little to include interplanetary space: the old global horizons are now cosmic. But man's appetite for apocalyptic visions persists.

True, there was a short period, dating from the seventies of the last century, when romanticism itself was under a cloud and Martin's reputation, together with those of his more pompous or sentimental contemporaries, suffered eclipse. From that eclipse he has now emerged and this exhibition of his major works cannot fail to produce to-day precisely the effect it would have produced a hundred years ago when his reputation as a creator of awe-inspiring immensities was at its height. Were Martin alive to-day, Mr. de Mille would find himself threatened by a rival whose ambitions equalled and whose creative imagination far surpassed his own.

No artist can carry out a programme of this kind without possessing an observant eye and a retentive visual memory. What he paints may be the world of his dreams, but it will be an invertebrate, unconvincing world unless it has been reinforced by close observation both of nature and of art. Mr. Balston has stated that Martin's early environment—the South Tyne Valley with its broad meadowland, its rocky hillsides and its fitful, stormy climate—contains the ingredients that Martin was looking for. Martin himself tells us of his careful memorising of thunder-storms. The mountain formation, even in so early a picture as his *Sadak* (1812), is convincing in the same way that some of Turner's early essays in the drawing of mountain forms are convincing. Those immense, distant ranges of frowning eminences that fill the background of Turner's *Garden of the Hesperides*, with the fire-breathing dragon lying along their summits, belong to the same geological family though they contain fewer geological improbabilities than Martin's mountain ranges. Martin may have seen Turner's picture, for it was first exhibited in 1806, but in any case his pictorial intentions are often closely related to those of Turner's earlier big pictorial 'machines,' though Turner's romanticism rarely indulged in the almost hysterical overemphasis on which Martin relied. The architectural fantasy in which Turner indulged in pictures like *Dido and Aeneas leaving Carthage* (1814) and the disposition of the crowds of tiny gesticulating figures in the foregrounds of his early mythological pictures must have impressed Martin. Moreover, in the more turbulent of Turner's romantic mountain landscapes, such as *Hannibal crossing the Alps in a Snowstorm*, painted in 1812, one can detect the origin of Martin's composition. Turner's habit

of evolving a design in which mountains, torrents and clouds swirl in an oval within the rectangular frame and meet round the picture's edge, with a burst of light from a lurid sun or moon occupying the upper half of the oval, is repeated and exaggerated in Martin's *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still.* Even those serene, sunlit distances that one finds in Martin's *Plains of Heaven* can be traced to a similar mood that one finds, for example, in Turner's *Crossing the Brook.*

Perhaps I have exaggerated the link between Martin and Turner, but it is significant that in the minds of their contemporaries the connection was sufficiently strong for the author of the obituary notice of Martin, in the *Athenaeum* of Feb. 26, 1854, to remark " Another distinguished artist has followed Turner to the grave. In his day, Martin divided the suffrages of the many with the master of landscape." The notice added " Possibly it was scene-painting, sleight of hand ; but it was also new."

For Ruskin, the very fact that the two artists could be compared was infuriating. " Martin's works " he wrote in one of his frequent attacks " are merely a common manufacture, as much makeable to order as a tea-tray or a coal-scuttle." The sentence is understandable, not merely because Ruskin felt himself bound to praise his idol by belittling Turner's rivals but also for the much better reason that, by his own standard of Truth to Nature, Turner was immeasureably the greater of the two. None the less, however much we may agree with Ruskin as to their relative statures, we cannot, to-day, judge Martin by Ruskinian standards. Martin lived in a time when the painting of ' histories ' and mythological scenes was held in the highest esteem, when the sense of awe in the presence of nature was at its most profound and when the literary content of a painting was permitted to cover a multitude of aesthetic sins.

A swing in the pendulum of taste, largely guided by Whistler, the aesthetic craze, and the slogan " Art for Art's sake," made it impossible to take Martin seriously at the end of the 19th century. To-day he has once more become a significant personality. The Surrealist movement with its unashamed emphasis on subject-matter and its pursuit of the strange, the macabre and the illogical, has done much to reinstate Martin. We can now enjoy once more the slight shudder down the spine which he certainly wished to produce, though we have divorced it from the high moral purpose that was also an important part of Martin's intention.

For us to-day, Martin is a master of what, in painting, corresponds to 'good theatre' on the stage. He is a superb stage-director. His scenic effects rarely fail. Even at his most theatrical he is solid enough and truthful enough to escape being ludicrous. Moreover, he is unique. One might have expected him to found a school of pictorial melodramatists, and the fact that he did not do so proves rather that what he did was by no means easy to do than that none of his contemporaries wished to do it. Had he, in fact, been the fore-runner of a body of imitators, all bent on describing cataclysmic scenes like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or the fall of Babylon, the result would have been intolerable. But there is room for one John Martin: and this is surely the moment to honour his memory as it should be honoured.

His age produced plenty of counterparts in the arts of poetry and the novel, but much of what was most lurid in the literature of his time has been forgotten. How many visitors to this exhibition, who shudder sympathetically at the diminutive figure of Sadak poised, between two thundering cataracts above a rocky abyss, have read the *Tales of the Genii* which it illustrates, or have even heard of its author, James Ridley?

ERIC NEWTON

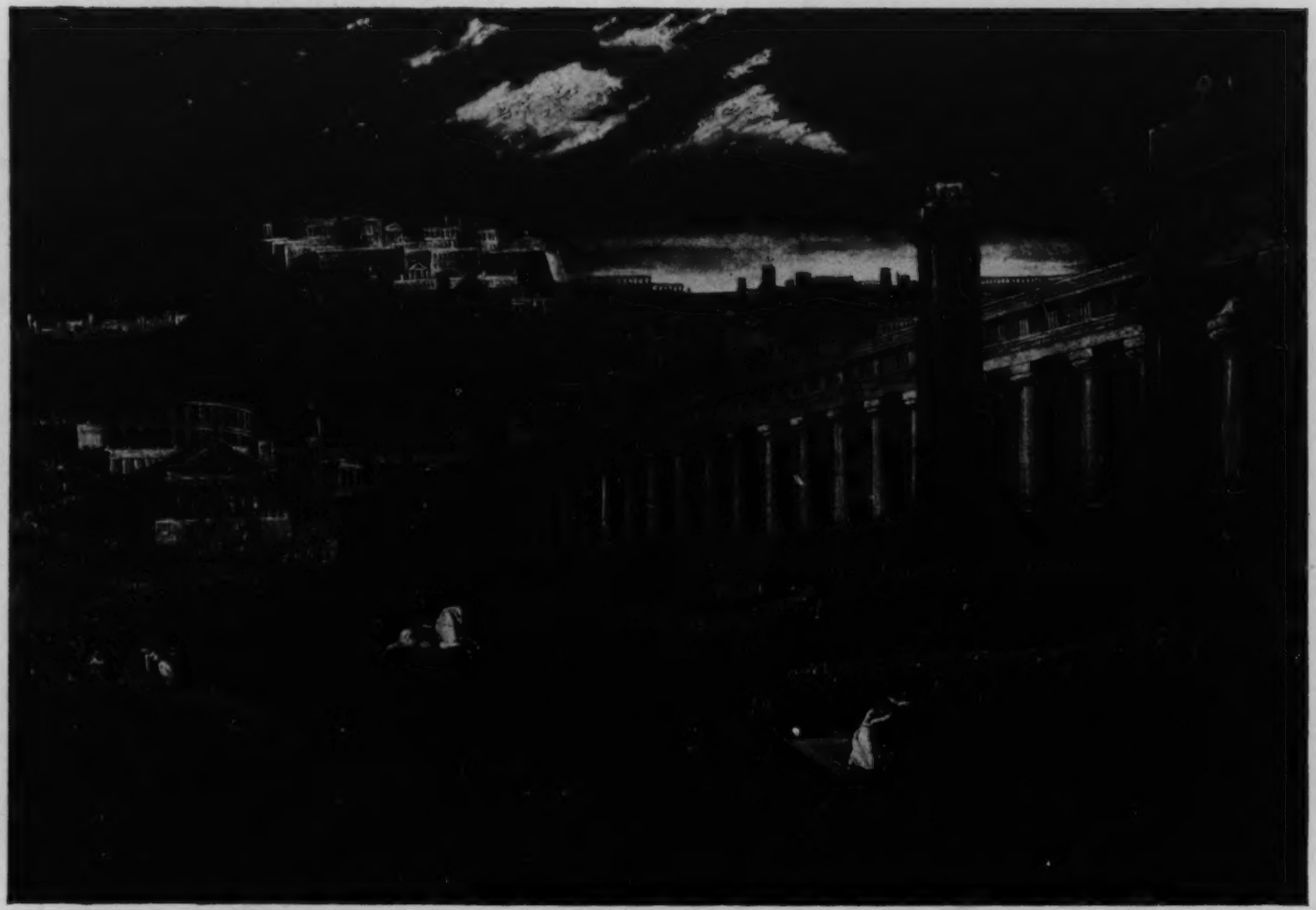
No. 3. SADAK IN SEARCH OF THE WATERS OF OBLIVION 1812

Canvas: $29\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{1}{2}$

By courtesy of the Southampton Art Gallery

No. 29. THE ASSUAGING OF THE WATERS 1840 • Canvas: 56×85

By courtesy of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland



No. 9. MARCUS CURTIUS *c.* 1822 Canvas: $22\frac{3}{4} \times 32\frac{1}{4}$

By courtesy of Sir Leigh Ashton

No. 36. A detail from: THE PLAINS OF HEAVEN 1853

Canvas: 78 × 120

By courtesy of Mrs. Robert Frank

CATALOGUE

1 PORTRAIT OF JOHN MARTIN BY CHARLES MARTIN
chalk drawing $23\frac{3}{4} \times 19$ 1854

Collection : Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

OIL PAINTINGS

2 HAYDON BRIDGE : BIRTHPLACE OF JOHN MARTIN
panel 9×12 *c.* 1810

Martin's birthplace. Clearly an early work, possibly painted before he left Newcastle in 1806 at the age of seventeen. There is no record of his revisiting Northumberland before 1828. The large building in the middle distance was the Grammar School at which Martin was educated.

Collection : Thomas Balston

3 SADAK IN SEARCH OF THE WATERS OF OBLIVION
canvas $29\frac{1}{2} \times 24\frac{1}{2}$ signed and dated 1812

An illustration of one of the " Tales of the Genii " by James Ridley, first published in 1762. In the Tale of Sadak and Kalasrade, Sadak, a rich and learned young nobleman, had become disillusioned with life and desired only forgetfulness. The Deev Alfakir promised to fulfil his wish, and directed him to a remote and rocky island where he found the Waters of Oblivion rushing over a steep precipice. The Deev appeared and bade Sadak drink. When he refused, he lifted him up and hurled him into the dark waters, which closed over him.

This cannot be the picture of this title which Martin exhibited at the R.A. in 1812, as it differs in important details from the engraving by Martin's son, Alfred, dated 1841, which is dedicated to J. Strutt, " the Proprietor of the original picture." By 1828 however another version existed which was lent by R. Lane to E. J. Roberts for his engraving in " The Keepsake " of that year, and the present picture corresponds exactly with Roberts' engraving.

The same design, though much more broadly treated, appears in No. 23, probably a yet later version, as both the frame and the stretcher are inscribed " J. Martin, K.L.", and Martin did not become a Knight of the Order of Leopold till 1833. There are other instances (see No.7), though not so remarkable as this one, of Martin's changing the " foxy hue " to which critics objected in his early pictures to a prevailing blue in later versions of them.

Collection : Southampton Art Gallery

4 CLYTIE canvas 24×36 signed and dated 1814

In Greek mythology an ocean nymph, beloved by the Sun-God who deserted her. She was changed into the heliotrope, a flower which is supposed always to turn its head in the direction of the sun's movement.

An illustration to Ovid's " Metamorphoses."

This is not the " Clytie " shown at the R.A. in 1814, though of the same date. The R.A. picture, measuring 72×102 in. in its frame, was later repainted as " Alpheus and Arethusa," and is in Earl Grey's collection at Howick Hall (see No. 22).

Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

5 THE BARD canvas 84×61 R.A. 1817

Based on the first lines of Gray's poem of this title:

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King:
Confusion on thy banners wait."

The ode is founded on a tradition current in Wales, that Edward I, when he completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the bards that fell into his his hands to be put to death.

"Martin himself seems not to have thought highly of this work, as he never engraved it nor mentioned it among his principal works, perhaps because of the timidity of his rendering of the foam, the woods, and the army, in sharp contrast with the handling of the upper parts."

Collection: Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

6 MACBETH canvas 20×28 *c.* 1820

This cannot be the picture shown at the British Institution in 1820 which measured 68×96 in. in its frame. It may have been painted for Thomas Lupton's mezzotint of 1828. A third, and smaller, version is in the Stratford-on-Avon gallery.

Collection: National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

7 BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST canvas 12×15½ *c.* 1821-25

The Dictionary of National Biography refers to the original version of this picture as follows:

"Its masses of colossal architecture, retreating into infinite perspective, its crowd of small figures, the glitter of huge gold candelabra and other details of the feast, all seen in a strange variety of light and gloom, enhanced by the vivid writing on the wall, produced an overwhelming effect on the public."

The earliest version (B.I. 1820), much damaged and deteriorated, has a prevailing "foxy hue." The late Sir Arthur Sutherland's version, approximately the same size as the original (63×98 in.) had discarded most of the red, but this is the bluest, and probably the latest (see note on No. 3) of six known versions.

Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

8 THE DESTRUCTION OF HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII canvas 33×48 *c.* 1822

This is not the picture shown at the Egyptian Hall in 1822, which measured 64×99 in., but it is an early version, as it was in the first Lord de Tabley's collection before he died in 1827.

The Egyptian Hall picture was bought for the National Gallery in 1869. In 1918 it was transferred to the Tate Gallery, where it remained in the cellars until it was destroyed in the great flood of 1928.

Collection: Lt.-Col. J. L. B. Leicester-Warren

9 MARCUS CURTIUS canvas 22¾×32¼ *c.* 1822

Marcus Curtius was a Roman legendary hero. About 362 B.C. a chasm having been formed in the Forum by an earthquake, the soothsayers announced that it could be closed only by the sacrifice of Rome's greatest treasure. The people were at a loss to interpret the oracle when Marcus Curtius, a notable youth, stepped forward and, declaring that the state possessed no greater treasure than a brave citizen in arms, leaped, mounted on his steed and in full armour, into the chasm which closed over him.

There is no record that Martin exhibited a picture of this title but in 1827 he painted a small sepia (now in the Laing Art Gallery) which was engraved by

Henry Le Keux for the "Forget Me Not" of 1829. This may give a clue to its date. In 1831 he exhibited a watercolour of the subject with the British Artists, and himself engraved it in 1837. Another oil version, 36×48 in., was sold at Christie's in 1880.
Collection: Sir Leigh Ashton

10 LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURE
canvas 23½×35½ signed and dated 1823
Clearly one of Martin's illustrations for Ovid's "Metamorphoses."
Collection: Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

PARADISE LOST
c. 1823-26

11 THE FALL OF THE REBEL ANGELS — canvas 18×26½
Book I, l.44

12 PANDEMONIUM — canvas 18×26½
Book I, l.710

13 THE COURTS OF GOD — canvas 18×26½
Book III, l.365

14 EVE AT THE FOUNTAIN — canvas 18×26½
Book IV, l.453

15 SATAN CONTEMPLATING ADAM AND EVE IN PARADISE
Book IV, l.502 — canvas 18×26½

16 EVE'S DREAM—SATAN AROUSED — canvas 18×26½
Book IV, l.813

17 PARADISE—ADAM AND EVE—THE MORNING HYMN
Book V, l.136 — canvas 18×26½

18 PARADISE—WITH THE APPROACH OF THE ARCHANGEL RAPHAEL — canvas 18×26½
Book V, l.308

19 HEAVEN—THE RIVERS OF BLISS — canvas 17¾×26½
Book XI, l.78

20 APPROACH OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL — canvas 18×26½
Book XI, l.226

Ten of the 24 oil sketches for Martin's mezzotint illustrations to "Paradise Lost" (Septimus Prowett 1827). When discovered in 1951 by Mr. Robert Frank they were rolled up, having never had stretchers.
Collection: The Royal Hotel, Scarborough

21 STORMY SEA AND BURNING TOWN

canvas 13½×21 *c.* 1830-40

Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

22 ALPHEUS AND ARETHUSA

canvas 54×83 signed and dated 1832

The "Clytic" of 1814 repainted (see No. 4).

According to Greek mythology, Arethusa, the nymph of Elis, was bathing in the Alpheus one day when the river-god fell in love with her. She fled to the Island of Ortygia where she was changed by Diana into a fountain but Alpheus flowed under the sea to the island and they became united.

Collection: The Earl Grey

23 SADAK IN SEARCH OF THE WATERS OF OBLIVION

canvas 30×25 *c.* 1833

See note on No. 3.

Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

24 THE EVE OF THE DELUGE canvas 15×24 *c.* 1833-40

This may date from about 1833 when Martin contributed a mezzotint of very similar design to John Gault's "Ouranoulogos." Prince Albert may have seen it and also a watercolour "The Assuaging of the Waters" when he visited Martin's studio in 1839 and suggested that he should paint large pictures of these subjects as companions to his "Deluge" of 1826. The resulting "Eve of the Deluge" (56½×85½) commissioned by the Prince, is in Her Majesty's collection, but its lower half is now a great dark umberish expanse in which nearly all details have been lost. "The Assuaging," commissioned by the Duchess of Sutherland, the Queen's Mistress of the Robes, has lately been located in the General Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland (see No. 29).

Collection: Thomas Balston

25 THE ANGEL AND THE SHEPHERDS

canvas 11½×8 *c.* 1838

Collection: Mrs. O. M. Pilcher

26 WHITBY BEACH WITH WHITBY ABBEY IN THE DISTANCE canvas 17×20 *c.* 1840

This may date from 1840. In 1841 Martin exhibited watercolours of Scarborough and Flamborough Head, and may well have visited Whitby on the same tour.

Collection: The Royal Hotel, Scarborough

27 THE BURNING OF ROME

canvas 30½×42½ unfinished *c.* 1840

There is no record that Martin painted a picture of this title; possibly it is a sketch, perhaps unfinished, for "The Burning of Troy" (39×53 in.) which belonged to Thomas Woolner, and was last seen at Christie's in 1913.

On its discovery it seemed doubtful whether it was Martin's; it is painted, hurriedly it would seem, with sweeps of very liquid paint, and there are no details, as in most of Martin's paintings, handled more deliberately with thicker paint. But the palette is certainly the same as Martin employed elsewhere, and there are familiar details such as the design of the fir trees; whilst the long ridges of paint which make the high lights can also be seen in "Hampstead Heath" (No. 27) which till two years ago was in the possession of Martin's grand-daughter, the Baroness de Cossen.

Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

28 HAMPSTEAD HEATH canvas 7½×11¼ *c.* 1840

Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

29 "THE ASSUAGING OF THE WATERS"

canvas 56×85 R.A. 1840

See No. 24.

Collection: The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh

30 SOLITUDE canvas 20×34 signed and dated 1843

"Ye woods and wilds, how well your solitary gloom accords with my soul's sadness!"

Collection: Montague Dixon, Esq.

31 THE LAST MAN

canvas 53½×84 signed and dated 1849 R.A. 1850

Illustrates Thomas Campbell's poem of this title.

"I saw the last of human mould
That shall creation's death behold
As Adam saw her prime!" etc.

Collection: Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

32 ARTHUR AND AEGLE canvas 66×88 1849

Illustrates the epic poem "King Arthur" (1848) by Martin's most enthusiastic panegyrist, Edward Bulwer (Lord Lytton).

"I have represented," he wrote to Bulwer, "a lovely night I saw some twenty years ago, which was so remarkable for the splendour of the heavenly bodies that, if I fail in doing justice to the poet, I trust that I shall please the astronomers, as I have taken pains to make my picture astronomically correct."

Collection: Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

33 TWILIGHT IN THE WOODLANDS

canvas 14½×29½ signed and dated 1850

Collection: The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

34 THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

canvas 52½×82½ signed and dated 1852

" But his wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt," etc.—Genesis xix, 15-26.

Collection : E. F. Weidner, Esq.

THE JUDGEMENT PICTURES

35 THE GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH

canvas 75½×118 signed and dated 1852

The Great Day of His Wrath was based on extracts from Rev. vi :

" And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake.

" And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together ; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

" And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains ;

" And said to the mountains and rocks, Follow us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of his Lamb :

" For the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand it ? "

Collection : The Tate Gallery

36 THE PLAINS OF HEAVEN

canvas 78×120 signed and dated 1853

" And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea. And he that sat upon the throne said ' Behold, I make all things new.' "—Rev. xxi.

An ideal landscape of unearthly calm. The actual landscape background of this picture is not known. It has been variously described as near Newcastle, Teesdale, Stainmoor, Bardon Mill and Haydon Bridge.

Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

37 THE LAST JUDGEMENT

canvas 78×128 signed and dated 1853

" The Last Judgement," the largest of Martin's pictures except the " Fall of Nineveh " (84×134 in.) in the Royal Collection in Egypt, was begun early in 1851, and in June of that year Martin assigned the right of engraving it to Thomas Maclean, the Haymarket printseller. It was finished, and delivered to Maclean, by the end of the year, but about that time Martin had started on the two companion pictures, and in June 1852 the engraving rights in these too were assigned to Maclean. Meanwhile the engraving of " The Last Judgement " had been postponed, and the picture returned to Martin's studio, where it was seen that June, together with its companions, " your splendid triad," by Martin Tupper. It was sixteen months however before Martin had finished them, only a few days before he started on his fatal journey to the Isle of Man. Much of the delay must have been due to " The Last Judgement." Whereas " The Great Day of His Wrath " was to represent supernatural violence, and " The Plains of Heaven " supernatural calm, in " The Last Judgement " Martin attempted the impossible task of combining a maximum of turbulence with a maximum of serenity in one picture. The many pentimenti visible in " The Last Judgement " show with what difficulty, if at all, he finished it to his satisfaction.

Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

38 COAST SCENE canvas $12\frac{1}{2} \times 18\frac{1}{4}$ signed
Collection: Robert H. Goodsall, Esq.

39 MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE WITH ROCKS canvas 10×14
Collection: Victoria & Albert Museum

40 SHORE SCENE, EVENING panel 3×4 signed
Collection: Thomas Balston, Esq.

WATERCOLOURS

41 A SOUTHERN BAY $7\frac{5}{8} \times 10\frac{5}{8}$ signed and dated 1817
Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

42 JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL $15\frac{7}{8} \times 24\frac{1}{8}$ signed and dated 1818
Collection: L. G. Duke, Esq.

43 THE TOMB $7\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ signed and dated 1819
Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

44 A PORT—MOONLIGHT $9\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ signed and dated 1827
Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

45 MOSES DIVIDING THE WATERS OF THE RED SEA 6×9 signed and dated 1832
Collection: Thomas Balston, Esq.

46 THE DESTRUCTION OF THE EGYPTIANS IN THE RED SEA 6×9 signed and dated 1832
Collection: Thomas Balston, Esq.

47 THE SEVENTH PLAGUE OF EGYPT $9\frac{1}{2} \times 14\frac{1}{2}$ signed and dated 1833
Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

48 THE ISLAND OF CALYPSO $21\frac{1}{2} \times 32$ signed and dated 1833
Collection: Mrs. Robert Frank

49 ROCKY SEA COAST AND SUNSET $3\frac{1}{2} \times 5$ signed and dated 1834
Collection: L. G. Duke, Esq.

50 THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT $6\frac{1}{4} \times 9$ *c.* 1835
Collection: L. G. Duke, Esq.

51 MANFRED ON THE JUNGFRAU $15 \times 21\frac{1}{4}$ signed *c.* 1838

Suggested by Byron's Manfred. Crying, "Earth! Take these atoms!" Manfred is about to jump from his mountain height when the chamois hunter seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp, crying:

"Hold, madman!—though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with your guilty blood."

Collection: City of Birmingham Art Gallery

52 THE PICNIC 4×5⅜ signed *c.* 1840
Collection : Thomas Balston, Esq.

53 RICHMOND PARK 11×27⅞ signed and dated 1843
In Richmond Park, the artist is still commemorated by John Martin's Oak, a huge tree over 20 feet in girth at 5 feet from the ground, which stands, surrounded by a seat, on the terrace south of Pembroke Lodge.
Collection : Victoria and Albert Museum

54 VIEW ON THE RIVER SEVERN 11½×28 signed and dated 1844
Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

55 RICHMOND PARK 11⅝×23⅜ signed and dated 1850
Collection : Victoria and Albert Museum

56 RUINED CASTLE 8½×10¾ signed and dated 1851
Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

57 ALLEGORY, SUNSET 11¾×18¼ signed and dated 1852
Collection : Gilbert Davis, Esq.

58 THE ENCHANTED CASTLE 9¼×16 signed and dated 1852
Collection : Gilbert Davis, Esq.

59 THE END OF THE DAY 7×10 signed and dated 1852
Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

60 VIEW ON THE RIVER WYE 11½×24½
Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

61 THE CAVE 7⅞×11⅜ signed
Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

62 LANDSCAPE : CLASSICAL COMPOSITION 7×9
Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

63 ILLUSTRATION TO THE BIBLE 3¾×5¾
Collection : Mrs. Robert Frank

64 THE ENTRANCE TO THE GORGE 8½×11
Collection : Thomas Balston, Esq.

65 THE GREAT ROCK 8½×13
Collection : Thomas Balston, Esq.

66 SKETCH FOR THE LAST MAN 7×11⅝
Collection : Gilbert Davis, Esq.

67 TIMON OF ATHENS 9×13⅝
Collection : Gilbert Davis, Esq.

ENGRAVINGS

In earlier years Martin had made some etchings of no great importance, but in 1820 he was driven by circumstances into mezzotint engraving. Four years earlier, when his picture *Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still* had made his name at the Academy, he had commissioned Charles Turner, already famous for his engravings in J. M. W. Turner's *Liber Studiorum*, to make a large mezzotint of it. Turner however had made little progress when in 1820, the stupendous success of *Belshazzar's Feast* made Martin eager to have an engraving of it published without delay. He determined to execute it himself in mezzotint on copper, but in 1822, before he had finished it, he had learnt of Thomas Lupton's invention, that year, of the soft steel plate, which had the special merit of yielding hundreds of good impressions whereas a copper plate would yield but fifty. So he scrapped his copper plate, and bought a steel one. Perhaps, before starting on it, he experimented with the two little mezzotints, *Christ Tempted* (No. 69) and *The Ascent of Elijah*, both of which he published himself in 1824. It may have been a sight of these which inspired Septimus Prowett to give him a commission which postponed the completion of *Belshazzar's Feast* till 1826.

Prowett's commission was for a series of 24 mezzotint engravings, about 8×10 in., to *Paradise Lost*, and, before these had hardly been begun, for a second series of smaller plates, about 6×8 in., of the same subjects. With these plates Prowett produced simultaneously four separate editions of the poem, which he issued in 12 parts between March 1825 and January 1827.

The 24 rough oil-sketches, recently discovered by Mr. Frank (see Nos. 11-20) suggest that Martin started by making such sketches, but adapted them freely when he came to his plates. Sometimes he engraved the larger plate first, and sometimes the smaller, and in these, too, he altered his designs.

Meanwhile the plate of *Belshazzar's Feast* (No. 68) had been completed, and published in June 1826. It was followed in 1828 by *Joshua* (No. 70), his agreement with Turner having been cancelled at great expense, and in 1828 by *The Deluge* (No. 71). By 1842 he had made nine more large engravings of his chief pictures.

Martin's Account Book shows that he sold hundreds of prints from these large plates, but it is now almost impossible to find good impressions. Of one of them, *Marcus Curtius* (19×28¼ in.), not a single print can be located.

68 CHRIST TEMPTED — $6\frac{7}{8} \times 10$ — 1824

69 BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST — $18\frac{1}{2} \times 28\frac{1}{2}$ — 1826

70 JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL — $17 \times 26\frac{3}{4}$ — 1827
Dedicated to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg.

71 THE DELUGE — $18\frac{1}{2} \times 27$ — 1828
Dedicated to Nicholas I of Russia.

PARADISE LOST (see Nos. 11-20)

72 THE FALL OF THE REBEL ANGELS — $10\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{7}{8}$
Book I, l.44

73 PANDEMONIUM — $8\frac{1}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$
Book I, l.710

74 THE COURTS OF GOD — $7\frac{7}{8} \times 10\frac{3}{4}$
Book III, l.365

75 EVE AT THE FOUNTAIN — $7\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$
Book IV, l.453

76 SATAN CONTEMPLATING ADAM AND EVE IN PARADISE — $7\frac{3}{4} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$
Book IV, l.502

77 EVE'S DREAM—SATAN AROUSED — $7\frac{1}{2} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$
Book IV, l.813

78 PARADISE—ADAM AND EVE—THE MORNING HYMN — $7\frac{3}{8} \times 10\frac{7}{8}$
Book V, l.136

79 PARADISE—WITH THE APPROACH OF THE ARCHANGEL RAPHAEL — $7\frac{1}{2} \times 11$
Book V, l.308

80 HEAVEN—THE RIVERS OF BLISS — $7\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$
Book XI, l.78

81 APPROACH OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL — $7\frac{5}{8} \times 11$
Book XI, l.226
Collection : Thomas Balston, Esq.